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ABSTRACT

Actions which principals can take to promote the improvement of K-12 public education are presented in this brochure. The brochure is one of a series which offers specific ways in which different interest groups can respond to the eight broad action recommendations proposed by the Education Commission of the States' Task Force on Education for Economic Growth in their report, "Action for Excellence." The following areas are covered by the recommendations: (1) educational improvement plans; (2) partnerships between states and communities; (3) educational resources; (4) teacher improvement and recognition; (5) the student's academic experiences; (6) educational quality assurance; (7) educational leadership and management; and (8) services to students who are unserved or underserved. (DC)

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ACTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS

Task Force on Education for Economic Growth

Education Commission of the States

EA015940

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

The challenge facing leaders in every state of the union is to inspire a new generation of citizens to be even more productive and imaginative than the generations who made "American know-how" a standard of excellence around the world. Beyond inspiring them, leaders must ***empower*** them by providing an education system that fosters the necessary skills, imagination and commitment.

Unfortunately, report after report indicates that we have for too long ignored the obvious connection between a well educated work force and a productive, expanding economy. In addition, technological changes over the last two decades are outpacing the schools' capacity to address change. Skills we asked the schools to stress a few short years ago seem inadequate today. And as the demand for highly trained people has risen, the achievement of students — especially in high-demand skills such as analysis or problem-solving — has been declining.

Americans have every right to be proud of an education system like no other in its commitment to serve ***all*** citizens, not just a privileged few. Today many exemplary schools, colleges and universities are graduating students who are as well prepared as any in the world to face the challenges of the future. But our schools must be strengthened, if they are to do what they alone can do: bring about an American renaissance.

We are challenged to act now, each in our own way, to:

- **Establish** clear, compelling and widely agreed upon goals and priorities for improving education
- **Upgrade** our expectations for children and the skills required to meet those expectations
- **Collaborate** as never before — educators, governors, legislators, business and labor leaders and citizens — to strengthen the schools
- **Educate** ***all*** students in the skills essential to economic productivity and to the high quality of life a strong, growing economy can provide.

WHAT IS THE RESPONSE?

In December 1982, the Education Commission of the States established a national Task Force on Education for Economic Growth under the leadership of Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. Forty-one distinguished national leaders set these goals for the Task Force:

- Create national understanding of the need for a well educated work force and of the changing skills essential to economic growth
- Promote policies, programs and actions that national, state and local leaders can use to improve education
- Establish partnerships among leaders in communities, business, labor, government and education to improve education in ways that lead to economic growth and a higher quality of life for all Americans.

The Task Force has published ***Action for Excellence,*** a report on the condition of education today and a series of recommendations for leaders throughout the country. The Task Force's eight major recommendations appear below. Following each are some steps leaders can take to reaffirm a national commitment to our children and our economy.

WHAT ACTIONS CAN PRINCIPALS TAKE?

The principal of each elementary and secondary school carries the responsibility for improving educational quality within that school. Many of the actions described here are ones that principals are already taking; others may be new to some principals. As school leaders, principals might incorporate some of the following suggestions into their improvement plans, tailoring the actions to meet school needs.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 1

Develop — and put into effect as promptly as possible — plans for improving education in the public schools from kindergarten through grade 12.

- Work with state leaders, the superintendent, business and industry leaders, and citizens to develop a comprehensive action plan for education and economic growth. The plan should:
  - — Endorse the vital role education plays in the economic future of your community and state and in preparing people for jobs
  - — Specify the skills needed for employment and citizenship
  - — Set specific goals for educational improvement
  - — Suggest ways technology can contribute to education
  - — Recommend policies to foster school improvement
  - — Establish timetables for achieving results and methods for measuring progress.
- Support efforts by the governor and other key state leaders to form a state Task Force on Education for Economic Growth to carry on the mission of the national Task Force.
- Communicate education plans and progress throughout the community:
  - — Meet with citizens' groups, parents and local leaders to discuss the school's progress and needs
  - — Promote a network for informing local educators or groups on educational issues
  - — Publish articles on education needs.
- Endorse the community education concept that learning is lifelong and that educational resources of the community should be available to learners of all ages.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 2

Create broader and more effective partnerships for improving education in the states and communities of the nation.

- Endorse collaboration among educators, government, business and industry, and members of the community to improve the schools:
  - — Establish partnerships with business to share staffing, training and exchange opportunities in schools and businesses
  - — Work with community members and local businesses to identify the skills schools are expected to impart to students
  - — Encourage business leaders, community leaders and parents to become school board members
  - — Work with parents to set education goals for each student.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 3

Marshal the resources which are essential for improving the public schools.

- Ensure that education dollars are well spent.
- Build community support for public education.
- Support state efforts to:
  - — Fund curriculum development in areas that can increase students' ability to participate in society — science, mathematics, computer literacy, writing, foreign languages and global education
  - — Increase financial, human and institutional resources for education.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 4

Express a new and higher regard for teachers and for the profession of teaching.

- Encourage state education leaders and superintendents to develop programs that:
  - — Provide scholarships and other financial incentives to recruit highly qualified prospective teachers
  - — Reward teachers who demonstrate outstanding instructional leadership
  - — Identify examples of excellence and progress in education
  - — Expand career opportunities within teaching.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 5

Make the academic experience more intense and more productive.

- Enlist parents' support for firm, explicit requirements concerning discipline, attendance and homework.
- Encourage students to progress beyond the basics in areas essential to personal and community growth.
- Study ways to strengthen and modernize curriculum content and sequence.
- Develop with faculty a system of student rewards that provides incentives beyond grades.
- Increase academic learning time — the time actually spent learning.
- Develop programs that let students help other students learn.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 6

Provide quality assurance in education.

- Help the superintendent develop a system for measuring the effectiveness of teachers and administrators; establish incentives and rewards for effective performance.
- Monitor student progress through periodic testing of general achievement and specific skills; report results regularly to students and parents.
- Support efforts by the state to upgrade the certification of teachers and administrators.
- Provide high quality, sequential inservice training by working with professional organizations, teacher training institutions and staff development personnel
- Work to raise requirements for high school graduation or college admission.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 7

Improve leadership and management in the schools.

- Encourage superintendents and state leaders, in cooperation with principals, to develop programs that:
  - — Enable principals to devote most of their attention to improving instruction
  - — Consider higher standards for recruiting, training and evaluating the performance of principals
  - — Establish state or regional institutes to help principals improve administrative skills
  - — Relate principals' salaries to their responsibilities and effectiveness
  - — Give principals authority commensurate with their responsibilities
  - — Reward principals and faculty for extraordinary leadership
  - — Ensure that principals are assigned to no more than one school.
- Adopt continuous professional improvement as a way of life for administrators and faculty; set a personal example.
- Let teachers and guidance staff participate in education planning.
- Delegate administrative tasks to other staff; concentrate on long-range planning; curriculum and evaluation.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 8

Serve better those students who are now unserved or underserved.

- Challenge academically gifted students.
- Launch a program to attract and retain, in courses where they are now underrepresented, more women, minorities and handicapped students.
- Support the broad, equitable distribution of educational resources so that no child is denied the possibility of becoming a productive member of society.

Although the Task Force recommendations are generally consistent with NAESP and NASSP policy, NAESP and NASSP have not formally endorsed them.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

The Task Force will continue to be active, promoting efforts to improve K-12 education and developing products that principals and other concerned groups can use to improve education for economic growth. For more information, contact:

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1860 Lincoln Street
Denver, CO 80295
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